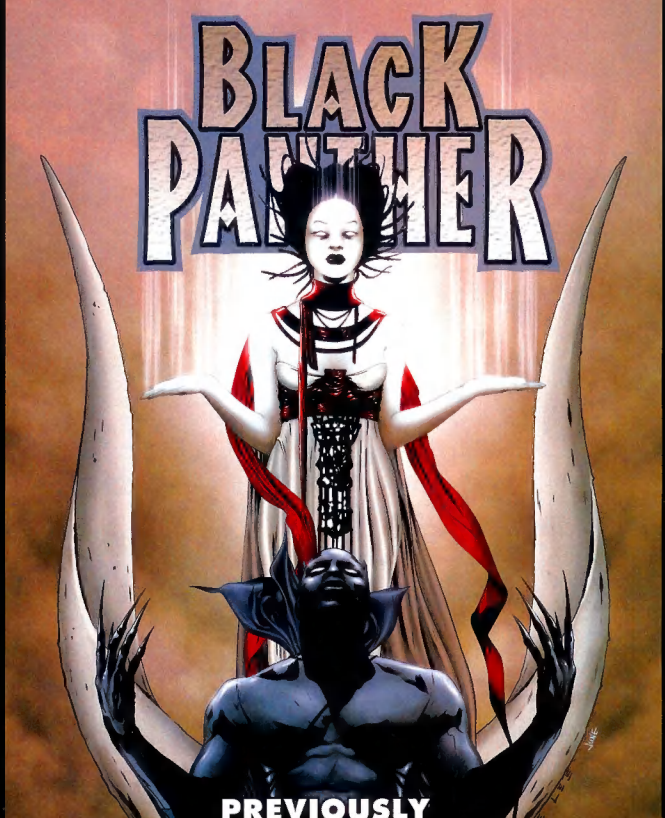

PREVIOUSLY

There are some places you just don't mess with. Wakanda is one of them. Since the dawn of time, that African warrior nation has been sending would-be conquerors home in body bags. While the rest of Africa got carved up like a Christmas turkey by the rest of the world, Wakanda's cultural evolution has gone unchecked for centuries, unfettered by the yoke of colonization. The result: A hi-tech, resource-rich, ecologically-sound paradise that makes the rest of the world seem primitive by comparison.

Ruling over all this is the Black Panther.

The Black Panther is more than just the embodiment of a warrior cult that's served as Wakanda's religious, political and military head since its inception. The Black Panther is the embodiment of the ideals of a people. Anyone who'd dare to make a move on Wakanda must go through him.

Every kingdom must have its Queen, and T'Challa's mother has decided it is time for him to choose a wife. After battling potential suitors and mounting a rescue effort in New Orleans with the New Avengers' Luke Cage, T'Challa returns to his quest for a bride. His decision has been made. Who will it be?

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AS A KING, IT'S HARD TO HAVE A MOMENT ALONE. YOU'RE LEADING A COUNTRY, COMMANDING AN ARMY, WITH ALL THE SERVANTS AND COUNCILS AND SECURITY GUARDS AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO COME WITH IT.
AND EVEN WHILE CONSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE, IT'S EASY TO FEEL LONELY. NO ONE TO TRUST, OR EVEN EMPATHIZE WITH YOUR POSITION.
WAKANDA, TEN YEARS AGO.
T'CHALLA, WHO DO YOU THINK WILL BE KING ONE DAY?
ODD QUESTION, T'SHAN.
YOU KNOW MY FATHER WAS KING. I AM THE NEXT IN LINE.
TRUE. BUT NOW THAT MY FATHER IS REGENT, WHAT IF THE KINGSHIP PASSED TO ME? WOULDN'T THAT BE NATURAL?
WOULD YOU SUPPORT ME IF I WERE MADE KING?
YOU SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON SCHEMING INSTEAD OF PRACTICING YOUR FIGHTING SKILLS, T'SHAN.
YOU WILL NEVER BE KING!

IF THIS JOURNEY GOES WELL, I WILL NEVER BE ALONE AGAIN.
A PROSPECT THAT THRILLS AND TERRIFIES ME.
A WISE WOMAN ONCE SAID: "THERE IS NO GREATER CHALLENGE TO A WARRIOR THAN TO OPEN HIS HEART TO LOVE."
WHY IS MY MOTHER ALWAYS RIGHT?
THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT MOTHER WIT, YOUR HIGHNESS!
NEW YORK. TWO DAYS AGO.
I TOLD YOU, LUKE. CALL ME T'CHALLA.
NOPE. I'M DOWN WITH THE KING. I'M GONNA REMIND MY'SELF OF THAT ON A REGULAR BASIS.
I APPRECIATE THE RIDE BACK TO NEW YORK. HOPE I'M NOT TAKING YOU TOO FAR OUT OF YOUR WAY.
IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR YOUR TROUBLES. AND I WAS HEADING TO NEW YORK ANYWAY.
HOME.
BIZ AT THE U.N.? THE STOCK MARKET? OR STARK TOWER?
AFRICA? WHO'S IN--
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT STORM?

HEY, MAN, WHATEVER FLOATS YOUR BOAT, IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS. NEVER SPEAK ON ANOTHER MAN'S WOMAN, THAT'S WHAT I SAY...
YOU HAVE "BEEF" WITH STORM?
"BEEF"? NOPE. NOT AT ALL.
BUT YOU HAD A VERY STRONG REACTION TO ME GOING TO SEE HER.
LOOK, MAN, I AIN'T TRYING TO SPEAK ILL OF HER, ESPECIALLY IF SHE'S "THE ONE"...BUT SHE ALWAYS SEEMS STUCK-UP TO ME, AND I DON'T EVEN THINK SHE DATES BROTHERS.
YOU KNOW HOW AFRICANS--EXCEPT YOURSELF, OF COURSE--CAN BE TOWARDS AFRICAN-AMERICANS. SNOOTY. ARROGANT.
YOU HIT ON HER AND SHE TURNED YOU DOWN, RIGHT?
YEAH -- BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT!
HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT HER?
BREAK IT DOWN FOR ME, PLEASE! HELP A BROTHER UNDERSTAND...
WELL, YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO HEAR IT ALL STARTED...

"...WITH MALCOLM X."
"MALCOLM'S RECENT TRIP TO MECCA HAD EXPANDED HIS THINKING BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE, INTO A MORE *INTERNATIONAL* MINDSET. HE'D BROKEN WITH THE NATION OF ISLAM, AND WAS TRAVELING TO AFRICA TO MEET WITH SEVERAL HEADS OF STATE.
"HE HAD SEVERAL AIDES WITH HIM. AMONG THEM WAS *MISS HARRIET MUNROE*, WHO BROUGHT HER YOUNG SON *DAVID* WITH HER.
"HE MET WITH SEVERAL IMPORTANT LEADERS, INCLUDING MY *FATHER*, T'CHAKA.
"MALCOLM EVENTUALLY RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES, WHERE HE WAS ASSASSINATED BY MEMBERS OF THE SECT HE ONCE LED.

"DAVID FELL IN LOVE WITH AFRICA ON THAT CHILDHOOD TRIP AND NEVER GOT OVER IT. SO, AS A YOUNG MAN, HE DECIDED TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF KENYA.
"THAT'S WHERE HE MET *N'DARE*. SHE WAS ALSO A STUDENT AT THE SCHOOL, BUT SHE WAS MORE THAN THAT. SHE WAS A KENYAN *PRINCESS*.
"THEY MARRIED AND HAD A BEAUTIFUL CHILD."
ORORO? REALLY? IT WAS LIKE THAT? WITH MALCOLM AND YOUR DAD?
OKAY, THIS IS DEEP.
SO HOW DID YOU GUYS MEET? ARRANGED BY THE FAMILIES?
HARDLY. WHEN I MET HER, SHE WAS A PICKPOCKET IN THE AFRICAN OUTBACK.
NO! HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

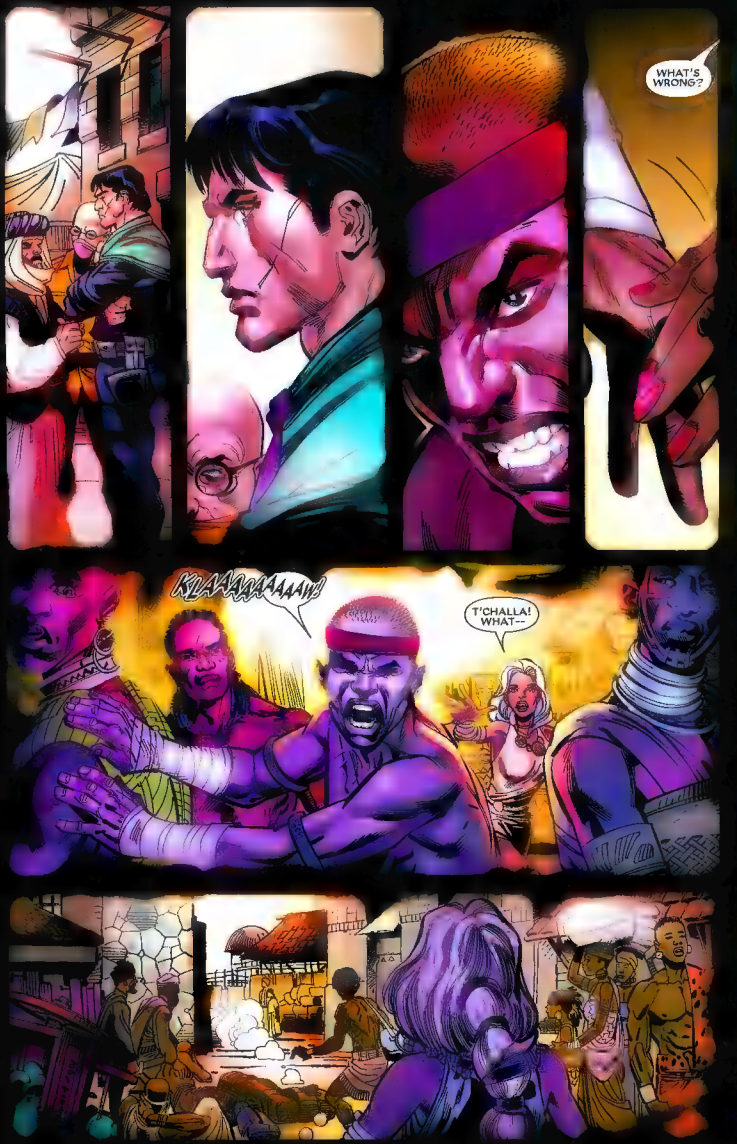
"HER PARENTS WERE KILLED IN A DISASTER THAT ALMOST TOOK HER LIFE. SHE WAS TAKEN IN BY A GANG OF THIEVES THAT TAUGHT HER HOW TO STEAL TO SURVIVE.
"ONCE SHE DISCOVERED HER GIFTS, SHE BECAME A GODDESS FIGURE FOR A GROUP OF DESERT NOMADS, BRINGING RAIN AND LIFE TO BARREN AREAS.
"THEN SHE WAS RECRUITED BY XAVIER TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE X-MEN."

HOLD ON. THERE'S A LOT OF THINGS THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE. IF SHE WAS *ROYALTY*, HOW COME HER FAMILY DIDN'T COME *LOOKING* FOR HER? AND IF YOU MET THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE, HOW DID YOU GUYS LOSE TOUCH?
ALL GOOD QUESTIONS THAT LEAD TO VERY INTERESTING STORIES...
...HOWEVER, WE HAVE ARRIVED AT YOUR HOME.
YOU'RE KIDDING ME, RIGHT? YOU *GOTTA* FINISH THE STORY.
ANOTHER TIME, PERHAPS. I HEAR YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES CALLING.
LUKE? IS THAT YOU, HONEY? I HOPE SO BECAUSE WE NEED A DIAPER RUN REAL BAD!
SEE, YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY NOW, BUT BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR, BIG TYMER.
I WISH FOR NOTHING BUT CONTINUED HAPPINESS FOR YOU. GOODBYE, MY FRIEND.
THERE'S MY BIG GIRL!
OHMYGOD, LUKE. WAS THAT... THE BLACK PANTHER?
YES IT WAS...
OH MAN... I GOTTA COMB MY HAIR BEFORE I GO OUTSIDE.

I HATE BEING IN THIS SITUATION.
THIS IS GOING TO BE VERY PAINFUL. WHY SHOULD I ENDURE A MINUTE OF PAIN? I AM A WARRIOR, BUT WHY CHOOSE A FIGHT WHEN YOU CAN WALK AWAY?
I'VE FLOWN OVER THOUSANDS OF HOUSES IN MY JOURNEY HERE.
THERE IS A WOMAN IN EACH OF THOSE HOUSES.
WITH ALL THOSE WOMEN TO CHOOSE FROM, WHY AM I DOING ALL THIS FOR HER?

SON, ROMANTIC LOVE IS A GREAT LUXURY. SO MANY PEOPLE STAY IN UNHAPPY RELATIONSHIPS FOR THEIR CHILDREN, BECAUSE THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO LIVE ON THEIR OWN. EVEN WEALTHY PEOPLE MARRY TO JOIN FORTUNES OR EMPIRES.
FATHER, ARE YOU SAYING THAT ROMANTIC LOVE IS NOT ACHIEVABLE?
JUST THE *OPPOSITE*. ROMANTIC LOVE IS THE *HIGHEST IDEAL*. THE FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE NATION. WITHOUT LOVE IN YOUR HEART, THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITY WILL CRUSH YOU, TURN YOU INTO A TYRANT.
I LOVE YOUR MOTHER. ALWAYS HAVE.
YES, SHE IS FROM A FAMILY FULL OF INTELLIGENT, STRONG, GOOD-LOOKING PEOPLE, MAKING HER GENETICALLY APPEALING AS A MOTHER OF MY CHILDREN...BUT ALL OF THAT WOULD MEAN *NOTHING* IF SHE WEREN'T A WOMAN WHOSE PRESENCE STILL INTOXICATES ME YEARS AFTER WE FIRST MET.
WHAT'S WRONG? DOES IT ALL SEEM LIKE AN IMPOSSIBLE GOAL?
SOMEWHAT, YES.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SON. YOU'VE GOT YEARS OF FUN AHEAD OF YOU. ENJOY THE LIFE OF A YOUNG PRINCE TO THE FULLEST. BECAUSE WHEN YOU MEET *THE ONE*, YOU DON'T WANT TO EVER LOOK BACK.

AND THAT WAS THE PROBLEM. I MET THE ONE. BUT I WAS JUST A BOY ON MY JOURNEY TO MANHOOD.
ONCE WE MET, THE ATTRACTION WAS INSTANT, UNDENIABLE, ALL-CONSUMING.
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL. SMART. TOUGH. COURAGEOUS. PRINCIPLED, EVEN WHILE BEING A THIEF.
ONCE WE MET, WE WERE PRETTY MUCH INSEPARABLE. WE HAD MANY ADVENTURES TOGETHER.*
*SEE STORM—IN STORES NOW! -EDITOR
ONLY ONE THING COULD COME BETWEEN US.


WHAT'S WRONG?
KLAAAAAAAAAW!
T'CHALLA! WHAT--

T'CHALLA? IT'S ME.
TOOK ALL AFTERNOON FOR ME TO FIND YOU, AND I THOUGHT I COULD MOVE FAST.
DON'T WORRY, HONEY. TOMORROW WE WILL SEARCH FOR HIM AGAIN AND KEEP LOOKING UNTIL WE FIND HIM... OR MAYBE DECIDE THAT WASN'T HIM AFTER ALL.
I'VE BEEN A FOOL.
I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES, AND INSTEAD OF FULFILLING MY COMMITMENTS I'VE BEEN ON VACATION. MEANWHILE THE MAN WHO KILLED MY FATHER STILL WALKS THE EARTH.
I NEED TO GET MY MIND FOCUSED ON THE TASK AT HAND AND TO DO THAT I CAN'T AFFORD ANY DISTRACTIONS.
AND THAT'S ALL I AM? A *DISTRACTION?*
DON'T MAKE THIS ANY HARDER THAN IT IS, ORORO!
HARD? WHAT DO *YOU* KNOW ABOUT HARD? SPOILED LITTLE RICH BOY. EVERYBODY HURTS.

THE SUDAN, TODAY.
THEY'LL FETCH A PRETTY PRICE ON THE MARKET...
UNTIL THEN, WELL, THEY ARE USED TO BEING SLAVES...
NO! PLEASE!
UH...IS IT ME...OR IS IT GETTING DARK?
...RAIN... PLEASE LET THE LEGEND BE TRUE...

...OH NO....
IT'S HER!
FOOL! DON'T POINT YOUR GUN IN THE AIR!

ALLAH, LET YOUR SERVANT MAKE IT TO THE JEEP IN TIME TO OUTRUN THE STORM...
PFOOH!
FIRST THE RAIN, NOW THE WIND?
THE SAND... CUTTING ME TO SHREDS!
IF YOU THINK THE SAND IS BAD--
SNIKT
--HOW ABOUT THIS?
SHUCK

THANK YOU, GODDESS. THANK YOU.
A GODDESS WHO PICKS LOCKS? HARDLY.
YOUR HUMILITY CANNOT HIDE YOUR DIVINITY.
WHY DID YOU GIVE HIM THE QUICK WAY OUT?
COULDN'T HELP IT. I HAD TO TAKE ONE OUT MYSELF.
IT TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH TO CATCH UP TO ME, LOGAN.
LONG ENOUGH TO SEE YOU'VE BEEN MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME. LAKES IN THE DESERT. ARAB SLAVE TRADE BROKEN UP PRETTY BAD. NICE WORK.
THANK YOU.
AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?
DOING THIS MUCH GOOD CAN LEAD TO AN EQUAL AND OPPOSITE REACTION. I'M OUT HERE TO WATCH YOUR BACK.
I BET YOU ARE.
AAAH, NICE TO KNOW DIVINITY HAS IMPROVED YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR.

YOUR BOYFRIEND'S HERE.
MMMM, THE TROLL IS HERE.
EXCUSE ME... WOULD YOU LIKE SOME FRESH WATER?
FIRST THE GODDESS, NOW THE PANTHER GOD! WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO BE FAVORED LIKE THIS?
YOU HONOR US WITH YOUR STRENGTH.
CLASSY GUY, YOUR BOYFRIEND.
YOU KNOW HE IS NOT MY--
UH HUH.

HOLA, T'CHALLA.
HELLO, LOGAN.
OKAAAAY, GOT IT. WHY DON'T YOU GUYS HAVE YOUR MOMENT...
DO YOU NEED A RIDE, LOGAN?
NO, I'M COOL. THANKS.
SO, YOU *FOUND* ME.
YOU DIDN'T MAKE IT HARD. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS FOLLOW THE PATH OF FRIED SLAVERS AND NEWLY MADE LAKES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT.
I USED TO DO THIS ALL THE TIME, YOU KNOW. AFTER YOU *LEFT* ME. I WOULD WANDER THE DESERTS, DISPENSING JUSTICE. THAT'S WHY THEY CALLED ME THE GODDESS.
I NEVER *LEFT* YOU. I HAD AN OBLIGATION TO FULFILL. I KILLED MY FATHER'S MURDERER, AND NOW I AM KING.

OH, I SEE. NOW YOU CAN FIT ME INTO YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE?
NOW I AM THE MAN YOU DESERVE.
YOU... FOOL!
WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I NEEDED YOU? YOU LEFT ME ALONE, A CHILD, IN LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
I WAS A CHILD, TOO. CHILDREN MAKE MISTAKES.
I WOULD HAVE DONE ANYTHING FOR YOU! WE COULD HAVE HAD IT ALL! IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT!
IT'S NOT TOO LATE!
IT IS!
YOU SAY YOU WOULD HAVE DONE ANYTHING FOR ME. THEN DO THIS...

MAIL TO THE KING!

Mail to the King!

I'd like this to reach Reginald, not Cory (nothing personal). I want to make a complaint about the book.

As a longtime Marvel fan and just as a comic reader in general, I consider myself a man, 33 years old—thank you! I am not a geek, or a weakling, or a sissy. I do NOT appreciate it while reading the grand adventures of King Panther to find myself laughing and giggling like a little girl. I find it offensive that I have to say aloud words like "Man, this so !@#$ing cool," while reading Reginald's King Panther. The clear and distinct character voices Reginald commands in BLACK PANTHER are too overwhelming; I find this to be obscene and inappropriate. The Falcon and Shang-Chi's guest appearances contributed a great addition to the story and offered some hilarious comedic moments; this was a major factor in my bout of incontinence. I don't like wetting myself after reading a comic deserving all comic book industry awards and the number one sales slot.

Unfortunately, I expect more awe and giggling in the next installment of BLACK PANTHER. What's a man to do?

Sophea Uk
Salem, OR

Dear Sophea,

You weak-bladdered sissy geek. I am offended by your offense and as punishment promise to write more stories that will have the same effect and more on you. Stock up on Depends.

Thanks for the love,
Reginald

Yo!

I just got finished reading BLACK PANTHER #12! I loved it! One of Hudlin's best issues so far. I'm loving the guest stars and can't wait to see all the vampire killing next issue. Also, I love the art—keep this guy on as long as possible.

Christopher Ward

Dear Mail to the King,

First off let me say that Reggie Hudlin has converted a cynical Marvel reader to his amazing take on T'Challa. I had been straying away from many mainstream Marvel titles recently, in favor of the Ultimate line, because I found the writing and art on those comics to be generally superior. Plus I enjoyed the fresh take on many of the characters. So when BLACK PANTHER started up, I found myself wondering why not just make this an ULTIMATE BLACK PANTHER title, since there was a slight reboot in his origin story anyhow. I worried it would eventually get bogged down with traditional continuity messes and thus read it with a wary eye.

But now I see that Reggie Hudlin's BLACK PANTHER works so much better in a non-Ultimate title, thanks to the astounding work in issue #12. I am so happy that someone had the guts to write a story that deals with the events that surrounded Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast. Living in Dallas, I have a soft spot for New Orleans as a place I love to visit, and have met many people who have relocated here from Louisiana as a result of the tragedy. I feared Marvel would not print a Katrina issue because it's a controversial issue. Leave it to a writer like Mr. Hudlin to cut through the political nonsense and get to the heart of the matter: Super heroes helping people in need.

Now, I hope some won't find the issue trivialized just because you've thrown a few elements like vampires into the mix. How else could you get Blade and Brother Voodoo involved? Besides, New Orleans as a city is just such a great locale for horror stories, with its creepy bayous, dark alleys, and above-ground cemeteries. But the real issue is that people in New Orleans needed help, and real heroes stepped in to save the day. I say thanks to all the tireless volunteers, police, and emergency personnel who saved as many lives as they could, in spite of the government mess that was FEMA. And it's so nice to see Luke Cage and T'Challa saving the day in a fictional representation of the real world. The Ultimate line is great, but only in 616 do we get such "straight from the headlines" stories that make us think about the world we actually live in.

Please keep up the great work, and I am hoping to see an appearance by Gambit and Rogue in the next few issues, even if it's just a cameo. As Mayor Nagin recently pointed out, New Orleans is a predominantly African-American city, but the entire Gulf Coast was affected by Hurricane Katrina, and every poor person in the region was harshly affected, regardless of race. I hope we get to see some more southern super heroes at work in BLACK PANTHER.

Ron
Dallas, Texas

Cory,

In the "Mail to the King!" section of BLACK PANTHER #12 you stated: "Don't forget that Luke Cage is a regular cast member of the NEW AVENGERS and THE PULSE."

That's only three books, but heroes like Spider-Man and Wolverine are featured in five or more books monthly. Cage is a great character that should get the same treatment. Or at least give him his own solo book. Other than that, I'm a huge fan of the BP and LC. Keep up the great work.

Sheldon K. Andrews

You won't get any arguments here, SKA. Spider-Man's a loser and midgets just creep me out. Keep writing in about how you want a Luke Cage monthly, it's the best way to make it happen. With convention season coming up, don't forget to drop by the Marvel booth and let everyone there know as well! He with the best "I Want a Luke Cage Monthly" T-shirt wins.

Hi, Mail to the King!

I would just like to thank you for the return of Blade to the comics. Ever since his first movie, I've been a huge fan of his and try to locate all the old comics he appeared in. I now have most of them, including tapes of his appearance in the '90s Spider-Man animated series. This issue made my collection priceless (at least in my eyes). Blade rules, and I'm looking forward to his upcoming TV series. I can only hope you guys will bring out more miniseries of this great character, with hopes of even seeing Blade have an ongoing series. Sorry, but I just have a thing for vampire tales!

Anyway, keep up the good work, both Blade, Black Panther and otherwise.

Here's a happy fan greeting you!

Raymond Baenen
Netherlands

Hi,

The Black Panther ROCKS! Issue #12 was AWESOME. You guys are really doing an amazing job on this wonderful character. I'd like to see him involved a little more with The Avengers, at least as a reserve member. Maybe he even could help form a branch connected to The Avengers and have The Champions reformed. The members could be the Black Panther, Hercules, Sting-Ray, Sersi, the Black Knight, the Black Widow, Warbird and Pixie. How about it?

It was good to see Blade, Brother Voodoo and Power Man all in action as well. All very interesting characters.

Hey, how about a united team of supernatural characters? Love to see The Supernaturals back in action again, with a new format and some new members. A few years ago you did a series on them but they were a different version from another Earth reality. This time around have them be based on Marvel Earth reality. PLEASE !

I do like Brother Voodoo's new costume. You have updated him, and I'd love to see his powers be updated too. At least how about a 12-issue miniseries. If they are HOT, it can be continued as an ongoing series.

Thank you for not hooking up the Black Panther with Monica Lynn. She isn't the one for him. It's Storm!!!! Those two have a history and a passion between them. LOVE to see it taken further. She doesn't have to stop being an X-Man. She is her own woman, and T'Challa respects that part of her in his future bride-to-be. Just as he is King and still is out and about in all sorts of adventures while still dealing with his country, the same can be done with Ororo as future Queen and adventurer. Equal rights to both sexes.

KingJason7@AOL.com

What with your being a king and all, Jason, I figure you get this royal wedding stuff. I'm not going to argue. I'm just wondering, where are we gonna have the bachelor party?

—Cory

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JOE QUESADA
CHIEF

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NEXT ISSUE:

STORM #2: T'Challa and Ororo's first meeting!

PANTHER #15: You heard the question. What will the answer be?